

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2020

E. Joaquin Esquivel  
Chair  
State Water Resources Control Board  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Esquivel:

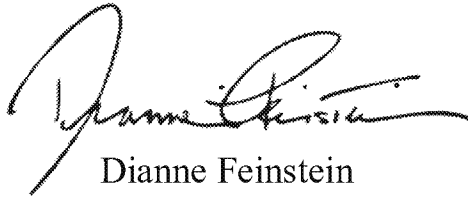
We write to request that the State Water Resources Control Board put the exemption review process on hold until the United States Geological Survey (USGS) has completed their pending study of oil, gas and groundwater in Cat Canyon. We sent a similar letter with our comments to California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM; formerly DOGGR) on July 19, 2019. That letter is attached for your reference.

California oil and gas development has been on the decline for decades, and the Cat Canyon Oil Field has been no exception. Companies are utilizing more destructive extraction techniques, with potentially far more devastating consequences, in order to extract what the limited oil and gas that remains. The underground injection of wastewater from oil and gas production is known to cause earthquakes, and the risk of contamination of nearby drinking water sources is far too great. Just recently, USGS found evidence of oil-field fluids in groundwater beneath the Orcutt oil field, another Santa Barbara County field directly west of Cat Canyon.

The Cat Canyon Aquifer Exemption would allow continued oil and gas development and injection of oil wastewater in this region at a time when oil prices have plunged and California has prioritized investments in clean energy, mitigating climate change and ensuring that any current or future underground sources of drinking water are protected. Given low oil prices and the current glut of domestic oil production, there is simply no need to rush to increase oil production in this region without a robust review by the USGS.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We urge you to consider the safety and well-being of the community and our groundwater resources as you consider this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our offices.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Salud Carbajal  
United States Representative

Enclosure: July 19, 2019, letter to California Geologic Energy Management Division

cc: Dorene D'Adamo, Vice Chair  
Tam M. Doduc, Board Member  
Sean Maguire, Board Member  
Laurel Firestone, Board Member  
Eileen Sobeck, Executive Director